



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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TO: The Acting Secretary
FROM: ARA - William G. Bowdler
S/P - Anthony Lake

~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~
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IPS by W Date 1-2-14-16

PRC Meeting on Argentina

The following is in response to your request for an outline of the middle option and a brief scenario for carrying it out.

Scenario

Actions under the middle option would occur in two periods -- the pre-September period, and the period after. The significance of the September date is the selection of a new President to succeed Videla in March; until then, the senior military leaders will be preoccupied with the Presidential selection.

Pre-September period: We basically would:

- pursue our political dialogue, possibly including a visit by the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs;
- use the current improved tone of relations to negotiate on grains the best arrangements we can get;
- foster Argentine support for our grains restrictions by signing the proposed Agricultural Cooperation Agreement;
- continue to press for human rights improvements, especially a definitive end to disappearances and the release or trial of PEN prisoners;
- support a general endorsement of the IAHR's report on Argentina and call on the GOA to give the report serious consideration;
- continue the dialogue on global and regional nonproliferation as a way to encourage ratification of Tlatelolco; and
- settle the issue of safeguards assurances for the supply of nuclear research fuel.

Declassified Case: 17- 87067 Date: 06-06-2013

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Post-September: We should:

-- Seek to establish a confidential, high-level dialogue with President Videla's successor to pursue specific human rights improvements, including a return to judicial processes and safeguards in dealing with "subversion"; a more specific timetable for the release, trial, or exile of the remaining PEN prisoners; an end to the use of torture during the interrogation of detainees; and a definitive end to disappearances.

-- Explore with the new President-elect whether anything can be done to provide some information on the fate of disappeared persons through some intermediary, such as the Church; but do not make accounting for the disappeared a central requirement for improving our bilateral relations.

-- Without sacrificing principle, maintain a somewhat lower profile on Argentine issues in international fora, such as at the UNHRC, letting others take the lead where possible.

-- Proceed with the meeting of the U.S.-Argentine Mixed Economic Commission in October, as agreed during Deputy Secretary Hodges visit.

-- Hold consultations, perhaps also with Brazil, focused on Soviet activities in the South Atlantic. Some middle-level talks could be held in conjunction with preparations for Ocean Venture in 1981.

Further moves toward normal relations, such as some positive votes in the IFIs or steps in the military area, would depend on the results of the dialogue with the President-elect and the GOA's good faith in carrying them out.

Rationale

We should help foster an Argentine sense of identification with the West and promote an Argentine perception that, despite important differences, they have something of value to gain from improving their relations with us. We should pursue U.S. interests toward Argentina in a balanced fashion, and we should avoid a situation where the Argentines are drawn into deeper cooperation with the Soviets.

The middle approach is the policy we have in

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fact followed since the Goodpaster visit. As a result, the GOA:

-- decided against participation in the Moscow Summer Olympics;

-- provided substantial help to the U.S. in blocking the Vietnam Food Aid project, linking its position to improved relations with the U.S.;

-- decided it would accept 300 Cuban refugees from the United States and Peru;

-- publicly supported the U.S. in opposing moving the WHO regional office from Alexandria;

-- recalled its ambassador from Tehran; and

-- agreed to set informal limits on its grains exports to the Soviet Union.

There is also some evidence that the GOA is reviewing the question of whether to proceed with the ratification of Tlatelolco. (We cannot be assured, of course, of the outcome.)

If we were to reverse the course followed since the Goodpaster mission, Argentina would likely:

-- abandon efforts to continue any cooperation on grains;

-- seek closer political cooperation with the Soviet Union to counter the increased pressure on human rights, perhaps extending that cooperation to other areas;

-- possibly reconsider recent Soviet offers of military equipment and training and an expansion of reciprocal Argentine-Soviet military visits;

-- sign a comprehensive fishing agreement, possibly including the provision of Argentine port facilities to Soviet ships and crews; and

-- dig in its heels on further human rights improvements.

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Proposed Talking Points on Soviet Probes in South America

You may wish to use the following points, drawn from a previous INR paper, in connection with the significance of Argentine-Soviet relations:

-- The Argentine-Soviet relationship should be of concern to the U.S.; Argentina plays an important role in grains, international support for U.S. positions such as the Olympics boycott, and in security of the South Atlantic.

-- The recent overtures toward Argentina seem to us to be part of a broader pattern of increased Soviet probes in many parts of Latin America, although the nature of these probes varies from country to country.

-- We think these probes reflect both specific Soviet operational needs and long-term strategic interests.

a) The Soviets, like their Cuban surrogates, are encouraged by the Sandinista victory and believe that new opportunities may be opening up for them in Latin America.

b) Over the near-term the Soviets hope to expand state to state relations.

c) Over the longer term, they hope to capitalize on what they probably see as a growth of anti-U.S. feelings in the region and a decline of U.S. influence.

-- Looking ahead into the decade, a basic realignment of Argentine foreign policy away from its present alliance relationships does not seem likely at this time; but Argentina could substantially expand cooperation with the Soviets, adversely affecting U.S. interests.

-- We should convey to the GOA our sensitivity and concern over the Argentine-Soviet connection.

-- U.S. interests should be pursued vigorously, but in a manner that takes Argentine deep-seated nationalism into account.

-- In summary, we should be concerned over the growing Argentine-Soviet relationship, but not alarmed.

HA has prepared the attached paper outlining a strategy in support of option A.

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Drafted: ARA/SC: CWRuser/GJWhitman:gjw
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